Stress Inoculation Training

Health Promotion Program

Navy & Marine Corps Public Health Center

Purpose

- Train self to cope with stressful situations by learning more useful and positive behavior patterns
- Similar to promoting disease resistance through immunizations
- Shown to be effective in reducing distress and improving ability to cope with stress!

Stress Inoculation Training

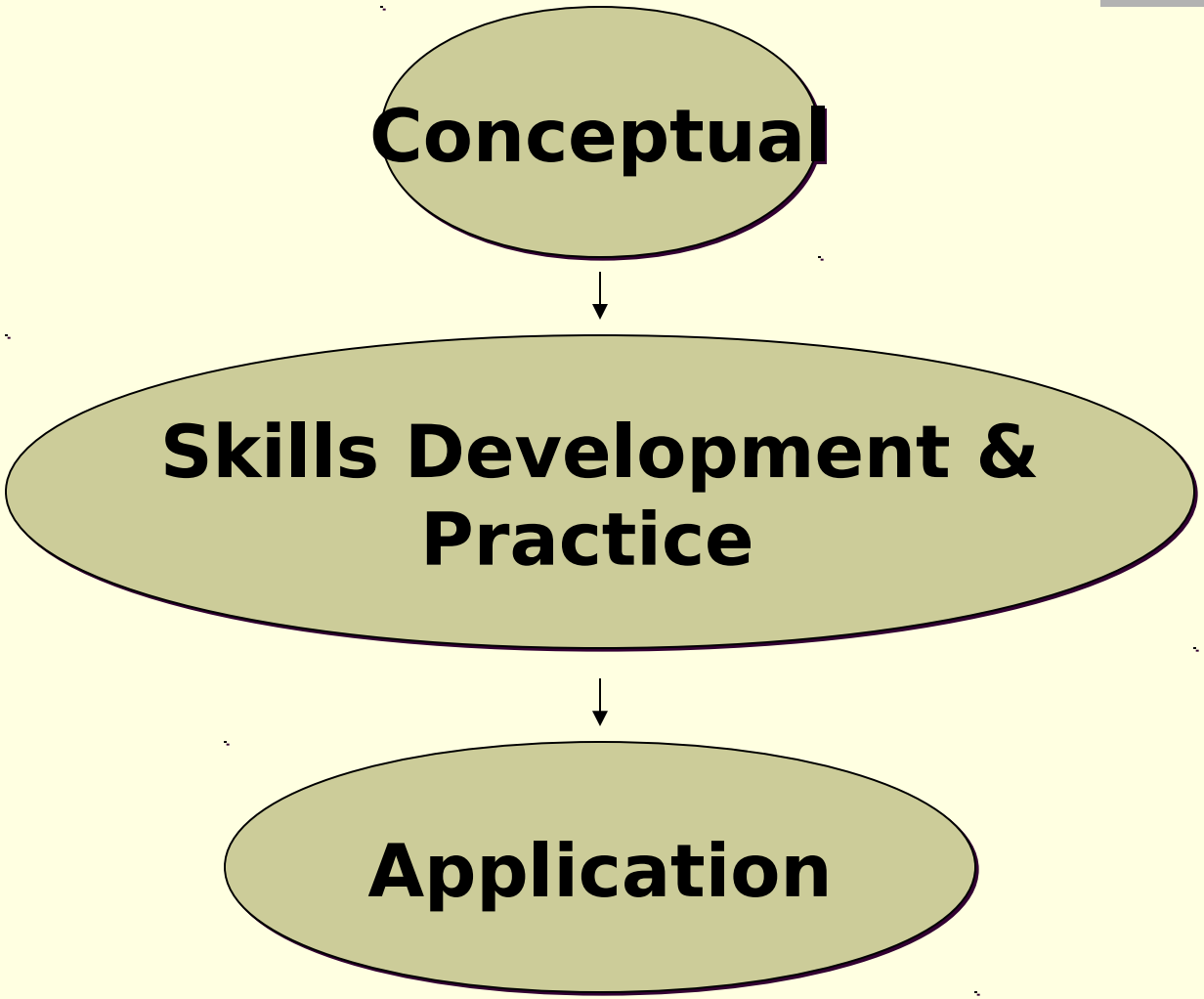
- **Improves resilience through effective past experience with stressors**
- **Deal with stressors in a gradual manner**
- **Provides skills & opportunity to build tolerance to current & future stressors**

Stress Inoculation Training

- **Stress tolerance is enhanced via changing individual's beliefs about their performance in stressful situations and ability to deal with distress**

- **Promotes hope, self confidence, self-control, & personal responsibility!**

Phases of Training



Conceptualization Phase

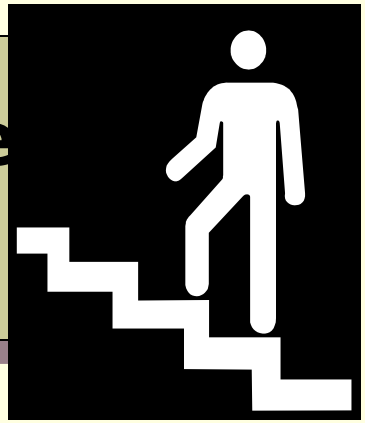
- **Understand stress**
- **Identify effects of stress in behavioral, emotional, physical, and psychological areas**
- **Ascertain the specific effects of stress on individual performance and productivity**

Skills Phase

- **Develop & practice a variety of stress reduction skills**
- **Skills include- learning how to relax, reducing stress through deep breathing and muscle relaxation & developing a toolbox of positive coping thoughts.**
- **Practice skills in imagination and then in real life situations**

Skills Phase

- **Rehearse from less to more difficult stressful situations**
- **Develop confidence to handle situation!**



Application Phase

Apply skills to specific stressful situations:

- **Plan, anticipate and prepare for potential and actual difficulties in personal training program**
- **Coach thyself**
- **Assess own progress**
- **Follow – up plans**

Blueprint Plan

1. Learn relaxation skills
2. Identify specific stressors
3. Develop plan to respond differently
4. Write up Plan & Practice
5. Coach self through the situation
6. Positively assess own performance
7. Plan & execute improvements

Learn Relaxation Skills

- **Need to learn and use new relaxation strategies!**
- **Beneficial relaxation skills include- Deep Breathing & Muscle Relaxation**
- **Practice them daily until you master techniques!**
- **Use often until they become a quick, easy habit & you can relax deeply!**

Deep Breathing

This relaxation strategy may be used anywhere and at any time!

Good breathing provides more oxygen to the blood stream that results in endorphin release. The result is deeper relaxation!

Deep Breathing

Slowly inhale through your nose. Expand your abdomen before permitting air to fill your lungs.

Slowly release the air from your abdomen and your lungs.

Repeat slowly for 3 to 5 minutes.

Enjoy the relaxed sensation!

Muscle Relaxation

Goal is to relax every major muscle group, from head to toe, through tensing and then releasing the muscles.

May be used in a variety of operational settings and situations with excellent success!

Muscle Relaxation

You may use and practice this skill sitting or laying down. Each muscle is tensed from 5 to 10 seconds and then relaxed for 10 to 20 seconds. If the muscle group remains tense, the exercise may be repeated for the muscle group to induce relaxation.

The major muscle groups are-

- **arms, & hands;**
- **head, face, shoulders;**
- **chest, stomach & lower back**
- **thighs, calves, buttocks and feet**

Practice twice daily for 10 to 15 minutes.

Deep Muscle Relaxation reduces tension & is not compatible with stress. Often we are unaware of our tension and stress levels.

Muscle Relaxation

- **Curl both fists, tightening biceps & forearms (Muscle man pose). Relax…**
- **Wrinkle up forehead. Press your head as far back as possible, roll it clockwise in a complete circle, reverse. Now wrinkle up face muscles like a walnut- frowning, squinting eyes, pressing tongue to roof of mouth, and hunching shoulders. Relax…**

Muscle Relaxation

- **Arch back as you take a deep breath into the chest. Hold then relax. Take a deep breath, pressing out the stomach.**
  Hold & Relax…

- **Pull feet & toes back towards the face and tighten shins. Hold & Relax… Curl toes while tightening thighs, calves & buttocks. Relax…**

Identify Stressor

Tip- Be Realistic.

- **What is the actual specific stressor that you face?**
- **If more than one, then choose one to start.**

Develop Plan to Cope

- **View the stressful situation as a chance to try new skills!**

Tip- Distance self from the stressor!

- **Identify stress self talk**
- **Replace negative thoughts with positive thinking**
- **Determine when you will use relaxation strategies**

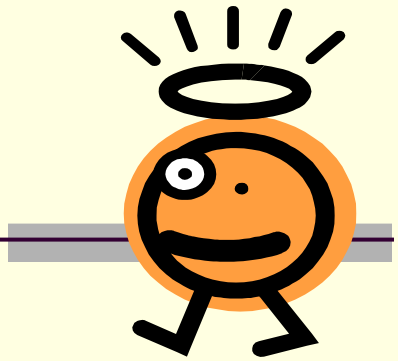
Rehearsal

- **Write down your action plan**
- **Take time to mentally visualize & go through the steps to effectively implement my plan**
- **Actually face your stressors and use your acquired skills and plan!**

Execute Plan

- **Prepare self as situation approaches**
- **Use breathing and relaxation techniques**
- **Utilize positive & constructive coaching statements!**

Coaching



- **We all talk to ourselves!**
- **Need to harness this self-talk and utilize in a constructive fashion to help, and not hinder, our efforts to reduce stress and to cope with stressors!**
- **Need to counter negative thinking & bad self talk and replace with positive talk!**
- **Try using these coaching statements or develop ones for yourself!**

General Coping Statements

- I can handle these symptoms!
- This too will pass!
- I'll ride this through- I don't need to let this get to me
- I can take all the time I need to let go and to relax…
- This is not dangerous!
- So what!!

Coaching Statements- Preparing to Face Stressor

- What do I have to do?
- I can develop a plan to cope!
- What I see as nervous, may be readiness to deal with stressor
- “Don’t worry” Worry usually does not help me at all!

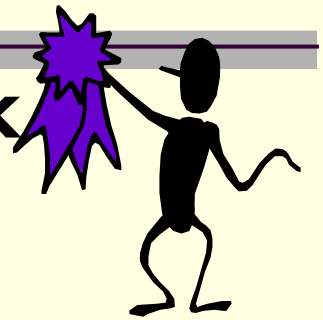
Dealing with the Stressor-Coaching Self Talk

- **Take 1 step at a time!**
- **I can handle the situation!**
- **Relax, I’m doing okay!**
- **Take a slow deep breath**
- **This nervousness is what I anticipated. It is a reminder to use my relaxation strategies.**

Coaching- Managing During Stressor

- When fear occurs, pause for a moment…
- Focus on the present. What do I need to do?
- I cannot remove all anxiety and fear. I need to keep it manageable…

Rewarding after the Plan



Positive Coaching & Self Talk

- **I did it!**
- **It worked!**
- **It was not as bad as I expected…**
- **I can’t wait to tell someone**
- **I’m improving each time I practice!**

Evaluate Plan

- **What did you do that you liked?**
- **What would you like to improve?**
- **What did you learn from the experience?**
- **Be kind, supportive and positive in your self-assessment!**

Implement Changes

- Repeat the previous steps
- Identify stressors, & develop plan
- Rehearse
- Implement
- Evaluate plan
- Make improvements

My Immunization Plan

- **Identify Specific Stressor_____**
- **Describe upsetting *feeling/emotion* which you are most likely to experience when facing stressor?**

  _____
- **Write down any stress producing *thoughts* when you encounter stressor? _____**

Stress Inoculation Plan

- **What can you say to self to help cope when you first notice that you are becoming upset?**
- **What can you say to yourself to help you cope while you are in the middle of dealing with the stressor?**

Stress Immunization Plan

- **What can you say to yourself to help cope after you have dealt with the stressor?**
- **Highlight your Personal Stress Immunization Plan for the identified stressor**

Review

- **Inoculation Training builds strength, tolerance and confidence!**
- **Use relaxation strategies & coping/coaching skills often!**

- **Develop & implement Personal Plan**
- **Revise and refine personal action plan**

You can learn to master stress!

References

- ***Cognitive Behavior Modification: An Integration*. Donald Michenbaum**

  New York: Plenum Publishing, 1977.

More Information

- **Managing Stress & Relaxation Skills**

  www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/stress

- **Resiliency**

www.apahelpcenter.org/featuredtopics/feature.php?id=6&ch=5